

Top Secret 219

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NATIONAL INTELLIGENCE DAILY CABLE

Tuesday 2 May 1978

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NATIONAL SECURITY INFORMATION

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State Dept. review completed

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National Intelligence Daily Cable for Tuesday, 2 May 1978.

[REDACTED] The NID Cable is for the purpose of informing senior US officials.

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AFGHANISTAN: New Cabinet

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[] Afghanistan's new cabinet, announced last night, includes senior leaders of the pro-Soviet Afghan Communist movement. The Vice Chairman of the Revolutionary Council and Vice Prime Minister is Babrak Karmal, a long-time Communist leader. His position in the government as deputy to Prime Minister Taraki is similar to his role as second to Taraki in the party. Most of the appointees are civilians, but a few middle-ranking military officers have been named, including Lt. Col. Abdul Qadir, an early spokesman for the rebels during the coup, as Minister of Defense.

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[] Announcement of the new cabinet will stimulate renewed fears in Iran and Pakistan that Afghanistan will now become a cat's paw for the USSR. Pakistani officials are particularly concerned that the late President Daoud's efforts to establish better relations with Islamabad will now be repudiated and that the border dispute between the two nations will flare anew. The decades-old dispute has involved repeated Afghan attempts to create an independent state--Pushtunistan--from Pakistan's two western provinces.

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[] Both Iranian and Pakistani officials warn, moreover, that there is an increased likelihood over the long term of renewed Soviet efforts to meddle in the affairs of the region in an attempt to secure a port on the Indian Ocean.

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[] Soviet news broadcasts have become more openly favorable to the new regime in Kabul. Radio Moscow described Taraki as Afghanistan's "leading revolutionary" and welcomed the decision of the Revolutionary Council to celebrate May Day.

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[] Relations between the new regime and Western countries remain largely in abeyance while the new government waits for responses to its request for diplomatic recognition. The first contact between an official at the Foreign Ministry and a senior US Embassy officer has been described by the Embassy as friendly; largely non-political issues were discussed. So far only the USSR, Bulgaria, India, and possibly Cuba have recognized the new government.

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[] US officials, in their first trips out of Kabul and other major cities since the coup, found all roads open and the new regime apparently in firm control of the countryside. Road and communications links with Pakistan have been restored and international flights into and out of Kabul are expected to resume today. []

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FRANCE - COMMUNIST PARTY: Hard Line

25X1 [] French Communist leader Georges Marchais, speaking to the party's Central Committee last week, refused to acknowledge any mistakes in the party's actions over the past few years. Defying criticism within the party in the wake of the Left's electoral defeat in March, Marchais said that the doctrine of "democratic centralism"--which requires strict obedience of party members to decisions by higher party leaders--remains indispensable for a revolutionary party. His hard line cuts off open debate in the party and will force his critics to choose between silence and acknowledged dissidence.

25X1 [] Marchais has consistently refused to allow dissenting views in the party press; he undoubtedly fears that once he did so, the dissent could not be throttled back. His tough line also makes it difficult for party intellectuals and others to air their views in non-Communist publications.

25X1 [] Unhappiness among party intellectuals and in the ranks will persist, but may not be voiced until the next party congress in early 1979. In the meantime, the leadership may try to appease its critics by instituting carefully controlled changes. Most party members probably support Marchais' emphasis on control. He is probably right in saying that the large majority of members approves the strategy and most of the tactics adopted since 1972.

25X1 [] Another factor in Marchais' hard line is the party's nominal alliance with the Socialist Party. Marchais evidently believes insisting that the electoral defeat was entirely the Socialists' fault is the best basis for a future relationship in which his party will try to undermine them. []

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ECUADOR: Military Meddling

25X1 [] *//Ecuador's military government, which in February disqualified front-runner Assad Bucaram and two former heads of state as presidential candidates in the election scheduled for 16 July, is again interfering in the electoral process. The military is apparently intent on determining its own successor, and if it proceeds with its plans the election could be totally discredited.//*

25X1 [] *//Last week, the government-influenced Supreme Electoral Tribunal disqualified center-left Radical Liberal leader Francisco Huerta, who was one of the top four remaining contenders. The Tribunal's earlier disqualification of Bucaram, the military's arch-foe, was justified on the grounds that his election would almost certainly trigger another military takeover. The action against Huerta, however, is a much more transparent attempt to rig the election. It precipitated the resignations last weekend of three members of the seven-man election tribunal.//*

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25X1 [] The tribunal is expected to disallow the candidacies of two lesser presidential contenders. It is also likely to disqualify the vice presidential running mate of Jaime Roldos, also of the center-left. Roldos replaced Bucaram as the standard bearer of the powerful Concentration of Popular Forces.

25X1 [] Unlike Bucaram, Francisco Huerta intends to fight his disqualification. The final decision on his candidacy will be made next week by the Supreme Court. The court was packed by the military last December and seems unlikely to rule in his favor.

25X1 [] //The plan to sidetrack Huerta and the other candidates could backfire badly. []

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25X1 [] It also will have problems keeping the remaining candidates in line. Duran-Ballen has already announced that he may withdraw from the campaign to protest the disqualifications, and other legitimate candidates could follow his lead. By turning the voting into a farce, moreover, the government runs the risk of creating a groundswell of public sentiment against both itself and the election.//

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